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## TOURISM AREA LIFE CYCLE IN LAKE TOBA

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aimed to analyze both development level and pattern in tourism area around Lake Toba basing on its life cycle (Butler, 1980). Samples were tourism spots in 7 regencies in the area of Lake Toba; respondents included 195 householders and 198 tourists. Combined approach (qualitative and quantitative) in this research resulted in the differentiation within each spot in the area whose developments do not fully follow the linear line as it is assumed by Butler (1980) i.e. emphasizing the factor of tourist number as a main indicator in a development. Empirically, all of these tourism spots, as illustrated in previous studies, experienced a “jump” of development especially on their tourist numbers. Beside the determination of quantitative indicator of tourist number, this also happened due to direct correlation with the factor of product as well as tourism attraction including demographic and economic characteristic of the market of tourists and also the factor of superstructure esp. tourism institutions and policies.*

**Key words:** Lake Toba, the life cycle of tourism area

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tingkat dan pola perkembangan kawasan pariwisata di sekitar Danau Toba, berbasis siklus hidup kawasan pariwisata (Butler, 1980). Sampel kawasan adalah spot-spot pariwisata pada 7 kabupaten di Kawasan Danau Toba; responden terdiri dari 195 KK dan 198 orang wisatawan. Dengan menggabungkan pendekatan gabungan (kuantitatif dan kualitatif) penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan kawasan pariwisata di Kawasan Danau Toba berbeda satu dengan lainnya dan tidak sepenuhnya mengikuti garis linear sebagaimana diasumsikan Butler (1980), yang lebih menekankan faktor jumlah wisatawan sebagai tolok ukur utama perkembangan kawasan. Secara empiris ketujuh kawasan pariwisata di Kawasan Danau Toba tidak serta-merta memenuhi posisi siklus hidup kawasan pariwisata yang digambarkan di dalam studi terdahulu, terjadi semacam “lompatan” perkembangan terutama jika dilihat dari jumlah wisatawan. Hal ini disebabkan selain ditentukan oleh indikator kuantitatif wisatawan juga berkaitan langsung dengan faktor produk maupun atraksi pariwisata, disamping ciri-ciri demografi dan ekonomi pasar wisatawan, faktor suprastruktur, khususnya kelembagaan dan kebijakan pariwisata.*

**Kata kunci :** Danau Toba, siklus hidup kawasan pariwisata

### INTRODUCTION

One of the developing tourism areas in the North Sumatera is the Lake Toba. The government has set this area as one of the main national tourism destination

(Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2009), considering the history, geography, socio-cultural, natural uniqueness and topography, and the political tourism planning until 2014. The Lake Toba area consists of seven regencies, which are

Samosir, Toba Samosir, Simalungun, North Tapanuli, Humbang Hasundan, Karo, and Dairi, and is located in the center of Batak culture with several of sub-ethnic, including Simalungun, Tapanuli, Karo, and Pakpak, and also various traditions. This sub-ethnic cluster possesses various cultural resources which are mainly reserved in rural areas. It also owns a large topographic and lake surface potential for various economic and non-economic activities. From the perspective of tourism development, the existence of these resources is valuable assets to force the development of tourism.

In the history of tourism in Indonesia, Lake Toba area has a quite strategic position. In the colonial period, some of the developing spots like Parapat had been made as resorts by the colonial authority. In the post colonial period, these areas developed in some spots, oriented in foreign tourists, for example Parapat, Tomok, Tuktuk Siadong and the surrounding, marked by the presence of high class accommodations.

The heyday of Lake Toba tourism was in 1996, with the visit of almost four million tourists, including local and foreign tourists. Nevertheless, the thick smoke case which was disturbing the air traffic in 1997 had resulted in the decrease of the number of visit to Lake Toba. It decreased even more after the economic crisis, which was then followed by the political crisis in Indonesia in 1998. Since then, the number of visit to Lake Toba has been gradually decreasing. It was again worsened by issues of the damage of environment caused by the contamination of the lake by the waste of floating fish ponds and the residential and tourism activities. Compared to other tourism area in Indonesia, the tourism of Lake Toba is extremely slow in its recovery of visitor rate.

Along with the implementation of the regional autonomy, the district government tends to carry out an internal-environment-

oriented development of tourism. In one hand, it accelerates the development of the tourism objects and attractions in Lake Toba, by which it means that each area is stimulated to enhance the performance of its tourism sector. But in the other hand, the development of the Lake Toba as a tourism area tends to be partial and go according to the policies of the local authority.

In the context of the development of a tourism area towards a destination, each regency in Lake Toba races to mobilize the usage of tourism resource in its administrative territorial and tends to ignore its linkage with the tourism objects and attractions of other regency. The neglect leads to an unhealthy competition among the regencies and tends to kill the opportunities of the development of tourism objects and attractions or even the tourism destination itself.

In this case, we could identify two major issues. First, the major planning of tourism development in Lake Toba is partial, either in the context of space or in the context of time. It could be seen from the presence of tourism master plan in each regency who is prepared based on local political interest and ignoring the integration with other regencies. Second, the ambition of local authority becomes less proportional in making Lake Toba a destination that is able to bring a positive image.

Lake Toba is making its development in the situation stated before. Tourism events seemed to grow for a while, and then it disappeared in a long period. Each sub-area goes according to its own interest; controlled by the partial policies in the context of space, product development, and its marketing. Development of tourism area also follows the direction specified by those partial policies. This is of course contrast to the character of tourism area which is commonly dense with the nature of borderless supply.

Another complicated issue is the usage of the surface of Lake Toba which is still unclear. The zoning of economic and non-economic hasn't been implemented completely, so that the activities are often overlapping each other, counterproductive, and potentially triggering conflict. In one hand, the government stimulates the tourism as the main regency sector, by which the government intensely facilitates the development of the tourism infrastructure in the main tourism object. In the other hand, the policy inconsistency occurs when, for instance, the government gave the permission of using the lake surface for the industry of floating fish pond. In a glance, the issue seems not contradictory, but when both of the economic activities (the tourism and the fish pond) come together in the area, an exceptionally unproductive distortion will occur, because many tourists will refuse to do activities in that area.

The statement that said the pattern of the development of tourism activities follows the linear line needs to be criticized. It is true that many tourism destinations historically record a growth from low to high, and there are even some which are unable to reach the highest growth [Pearce, 1995]. But the growth line is not generic and doesn't take place in every tourism destination, especially the micro ones. Otherwise, there are some areas which develop for decades and then

stagnant or even decreasing for the next years because of some management factors which are not going well.

So far, one of the theoretic models of the tourism area development which is commonly discussed by the experts is the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model. The model was first stated by Richard *Butler*, [1980] to predict the direction and tendency of the development of tourism area. The pattern of the destination development follows what is happening in the pattern of the sale of good and service products; it initially goes slowly, followed by a rapid growth, then it goes stable and eventually decreases [Butler, 1980: 6]. It is clear that the thesis submitted by Butler is that the development of tourism area is commonly following a specific direction or life cycle, or following a basic asymptotic curve [Butler, 1980: 6]. That cycle is found in most of tourism destination and it seems not to undergo much significant change, even though evolutionarily there is a tendency to [Haywood, 2006].

According to Butler, tourism area life cycle follows specific stages, include the exploration, involvement, stagnation, post-stagnation (marked by two possibilities, decline and rejuvenate), as seen on the Figure 1.

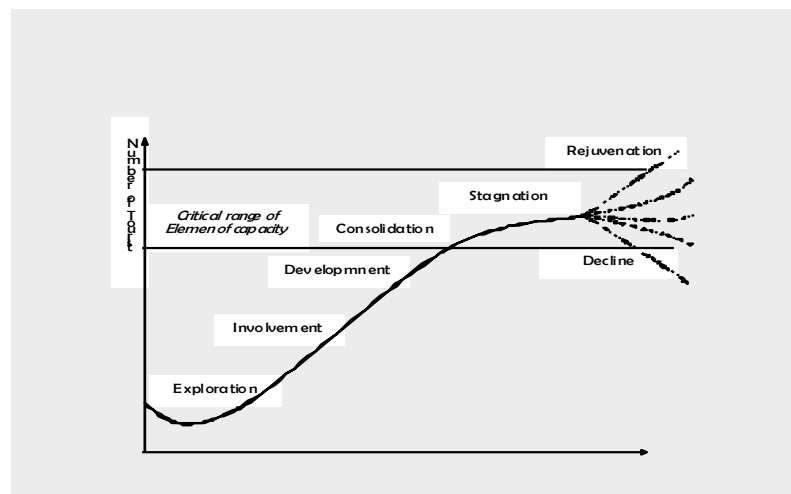


Figure 1. Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (Butler, 1980)

As stated by Richard Butler, *TALC* is used to describe and to understand the process of the development of tourism destinations in a wide variety of settings [Butler, 2011: 3]. It means that the development of tourism area occurs in various stages and it proceeds through a long process and is loaded with diversity [Haywood, 2005].

In various previous studies, it can be concluded that the *TALC* model is an analytical framework which is quite relevant in explaining the dynamics of the development of tourism destination, even though the universal consensus about the validity and application of the model hasn't been achieved. It can be concluded that the *TALC* model is precise enough to describe the stages of the development of tourism area in a normal situation externally. It means that even though it is useful in describing the evolution of tourism development, which includes the stages and period of development gone through by a tourism area, the precision of the *TALC* model mostly depends on a number of external factors, such as political riot, terrorism, catastrophe, etc. For example, The Gulf War in 1991 which was not related to Indonesia tourism in fact had lowered the tourist visit from other countries and overall lowered the number of foreign tourist in Indonesia.

In his latest analysis regarding the *TALC*, Butler, [2011] quoted the experts' studies about the effects of external factor change towards the development of tourism area. Some examples were cited to improve the sophistication of this *TALC* model, for instance the post-tsunami in Thailand. Lots of tourism areas experienced a great shock and directly broke the linear line of the development of tourism area in the context of *TALC*. The shock of bomb terror on September 11<sup>th</sup> in New York, USA and in Madrid, Spain, which are the objects of study based on the *TALC* model, proved to provoke a significant effect towards the development of tourism destination. The researchers concluded that the impact of

the tourist air travel from these catastrophes follow scalable and fad life cycles, respectively [Butler, 2011:8]. Hypothetically, it can be said that the *TALC* model will always move in a dynamic motion but is not always evolutionarily linear if the external and global factors, such as climate change, also serve as the subject of research.

On a different level, the influence of internal factor also can't be ignored. Internal factor is a factor that sticks directly to the tourism area, such as the uniqueness of the resources and attraction, local residents and the policies of development of tourism, and also the damage of tourism resources, attraction-related management, service quality and the cooperation of among the subjects of tourism. In the initial stage of the development of tourism area, individual entrepreneur often plays an important role in introducing the new elements related to the life cycle.

In this context, it seems that North Sumatera as a significant destination is a relevant example. The quality of attractions and tourism service in this region tend to encounter a slowdown in the past few years. Research conducted by Solahuddin and Damanik,[2007] showed that the foreign tourists who visited North Sumatera considered that the quality of tourism service was low and lack of innovation to promote the attraction of the available tourism objects. At the same time (and even up to now), the number of foreign tourist hasn't yet to come near to that of 1996.

## THE METHODS

The research was conducted by combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches (mix-method). To explain the complexity of the development of tourism area by the model *TALC*, a number of research variables are used, including: (1) *the number of tourist*, (2) *the development of tourist*, (3) *accessibility*, (4) *facilities*

availability, (5) psychographic, economic, and socio-demographic segmentation profile of the tourist, (6) social, economic, and cultural profile of the local community, (7) profile of policy, (8) participation of the society, and (9) institutions.

To judge the position of each tourism area in TALC model, the data of each research variable group is give a score. The score of each variable group ranges from 1 to 5. Each variable group consists of different number of variable. Therefore, the score of each variable is determined proportionally by the following formula:

$$SEl = LS/NV (i...n)$$

$$SEh = HS/NV (i...n)$$

SEl : score of lowest variable group

SEh : score of highest variable group

NV : number of variable in variable group

LS : lowest score, which is 1

HS : highest score, which is 5

- a. Variable group 1 (number of tourist) consists of two variables, therefore the score ranges from the lowest  $\frac{1}{2}$  (=0.5) to the highest  $\frac{5}{2}$  (=2.5).
- b. Variable group 2 (attraction) consists of three variables, therefore the score ranges from the lowest  $\frac{1}{3}$  (=0.33) to the highest  $\frac{5}{3}$  (=1.67).
- c. Variable group 3 (accessibility) consists of three variables; therefore the score calculation is same as (b).
- d. Variable group 4 (availability of facilities) consists of five variables, therefore the score ranges from the lowest  $\frac{1}{5}$  (=0.2) to the highest  $\frac{5}{5}$  (=1).
- e. Variable group 5 (tourist characteristic) consists of nine variables; therefore the score ranges from the lowest  $\frac{1}{9}$  to the highest  $\frac{5}{9}$ .
- f. Variable group 6 (local community characteristic) consists of five variables, therefore the score calculation is same as (d).
- g. Variable group 7 (profile of policies) is the same as (b) and (c).
- h. Variable group 8 (participation of society) consists of two variables, therefore the score ranges from the lowest  $\frac{1}{2}$  (=1) to the highest  $\frac{5}{2}$  (=2.5).
- i. Variable group 9 (institutions) consists of one variable, therefore the score ranges from the lowest  $\frac{1}{1}$  to the highest  $\frac{5}{1}$ .

The Table 1. The method of data analysis based in the calculation of score and the percentage of variable score for each tourism area.

Table 1. The method of data analysis based in the calculation of score and the percentage of variable score for each tourism area

No.	Variable Group	Percentage (%)
1.	The Number of Tourist	20
	1. The number or tourist per year in the past two years	
	2. The percentage of local or foreign tourist	
2.	Attraction	15
	3. The number of tourism attraction	
	4. The type of tourism attraction	
	5. The diversity of tourism attraction	
3.	Accessibility	15
	6. The length of road accessible by four-wheeled vehicle	
	7. Type of transportation to and from the tourism area	
	8. Frequency of transportation to and from the destination	

Continue Table 1.

4.	Avalibility of Facilities	15
	9. Number and type of hotel/accomodation	
	10. Number of hotel room/accomodation	
	11. Number and type of restaurant	
	12. Number of travel agent	
	13. N umber and diversity of souvenir store	
5.	Characteristic of Tourist	10
	14. Frequency of visit	
	15. Preference of attraction in tourism area	
	16. Type of travel (group – individual)	
	17. Average staying period in the tourism area	
	18. Accomodation facility used	
	19. Average expense in the tourism area	
	20. Latest education	
	21. Age	
	22. Origin region/country	
6.	Characteristic of Local Community	10
	23. Demographic composition	
	24. Livelihood structure	
	25. Education structure	
	26. Society's attitude and respond towards the tourism development	
	27. Intensity of cultural ritual in daily life	
7.	Profile of Policies	5
	28. Availability of the area structuring regulation	
	29. Availability of the area development planning design	
	30. Realized development action program	
8.	Participation of Society	5
	31. Percentage of resident working in tourism sector	
	32. Percentage of loca resident owning tourism business	
9.	Tourism Institution	5
	33. The number of tourism institution	
Total .....		100

The distinction of the percentage is based in the expert judgment about the contribution of each element, factor, or condition of each variable which is various according to the development of tourism area. The highest percentage is given to the variable of the number of tourist regarding its important role in measuring the cycle of tourism development, as stated by *Butler*, [2006] and also *Weaver*, [2006]. By those percentage, the total score ranges from the lowest 1 to the highest 10. The number 1 – 10 is then classified into 5 categories according to the phase of the development of tourism area showed in the *TALC*. The tourism area which get the

score 1.00 – 1.99 is classified as a newly explored area; the score 2.00 – 3.99 classified as the involvement phase; the score 4.00 – 5.99 classified as the developing phase; the score 6.00 – 7.99 is classified as the consolidation phase; and the score 8.00 – 10.00 is classified as the declining/rejuvenation phase.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the field research, either from the primer data or the secondary data, the percentage of variables and indicators can be explained in the table 2.



Table 2. Total Score of the Variable of Development of Tourism Area in Lake Toba

Variable Group	Location of Research							
	PERCENTAGE	SAMOSIR Tuktuk Siadong	NORTH TAPANULI Muara. Sibandang	SIMALUNGUN Parapat	TOBA SAMOSIR Lumban Silintong	HUMBAHAS Bakara, Makam Sisingamangaraja	DAIRI Paropo	KARO Tongging
Number of Tourist	20	16,2	16,2	3,4	6,8	3,4	3,4	6,8
Attraction	15	13,5	8,6	8,6	8,6	8,6	2,9	5,7
Accessibility	15	11,4	13,5	11,4	5,7	11,4	11,4	5,7
Availability of Facilities	15	8,6	13,5	8,6	5,7	2,9	2,9	2,9
Characteristic of Tourist	10	1,5	1,5	4,6	7,2	1,5	7,2	1,5
Characteristic of Local Community	10	7,2	4,6	7,2	4,6	7,2	7,2	1,5
Profile of Policies	5	5,4	5,4	5,4	5,4	3,2	1,1	3,2
Participation of Society	5	3,6	3,6	1,5	2,3	1,5	0,8	0,8
Tourism Institution	5	3,6	3,6	2,3	2,3	0	0	0
Total / Final Score	100	71,0	70,5	53,0	46,6	39,7	36,9	28,1

Source: Field Research, 2011

The basic data above shows a clear description about the difference of the score of each variable group. The score of the tourism development in each area differs significantly not only partially, but also cumulatively.

Adopting Butler's model (1980), the following Figure 2 shows the description

of the imbalance development of areas in Lake Toba based on the number of tourist. Paropo (Dairi), Muara (North Tapanuli) and Bakkara – Makam Sisingamangaraja (Humbahas) are classified as newly explored areas. In contrast, Parapat and Tuktuk Siadong are classified as areas which have started to be stagnant.

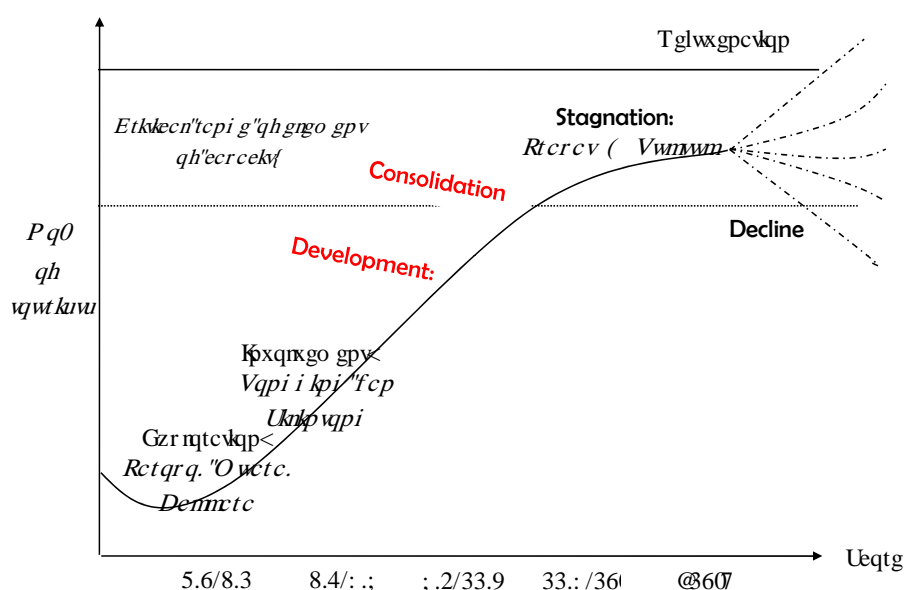


Figure 2. Tourism Area Life Cycle Based on the Number of Tourist in Lake Toba

According to the graphic above, there are three logical interpretations:

1. The development achieved by Paropo (Dairi), Muara-Sibandang (North Tapanuli) and Bakara-Makam Sisingamangaraja (Humbahas) is on an initial stage. The number of tourist visiting the area is still low and the tourism activities have not developed so much. The tourism infrastructure is still in a trial phase; which means that the stakeholders simply provide the attractions and are commonly not based on a clear planning, but they still expect for the development of the number of visitors. While for the tourist, their visit is more like a casual and unplanned visit, for example their objection is to spend a long spare time. Another possibility is that they visit those area speculatively, by which they add the variety of destination visited with a relatively small allocation of time and money.
2. The development achieved by Tongging (Karo Regency) and Lumban Silintong (Toba Samosir Regency) is slightly better than that of the first three areas. Empirically, these two areas have already indicated a positive development, even though they still need quite long a time to expand more rapidly. The presence of tourists in these two locations is dominated by the local tourists who generally do not require many tourism facilities as a base of their activities.
3. There seems to be a leap in the development of tourism destination in Lake Toba area. Two major stages in *TALC*, the developing and consolidation phases are not found in the seven tourism areas studied in this research. This means that the distance of development between one area and another is wide enough. In one hand, the Tongging and Lumban Silintong

areas are still in the involvement phase, while in the other hand Parapat (Simalungun Regency) and Tuktuk Siadong (Samosir Regency) have already reached the stagnation phase. This could happen because of the function linkage or bond of the more developing area with a newly explored area is not too strong. The position reached by Parapat and Tuktuk on the stagnation phase does not affect the development of Tongging, Lumban Silintong, and the three other areas.

The analysis resulted in the absence of the two development stages in *TALC*, the development and consolidation stages, which are not found in the tourism area Lake Toba. The research suggested that contrast to the development of tourism area found in other area [Weaver, 2006; Lagiewski, 2006; Boyd, 2006]; the *TALC* used in this research is not completely applicative. Theoretically, this discovery asserted the need of considering the special factor of space in the application of *TALC* model.

By using the data in Table 2, we could further position each area in the tourism area life cycle in Lake Toba, started from the exploration phase, involvement phase, development phase, consolidation phase, and stagnation phase. However it must be emphasized that differ from the explanation above, which is based on the number of tourist, the position of each area here is based on the accumulation of score of the nine variable groups, including the tourist. The union of these various variable score objects to prove that the development of tourism area cyclically has to be seen from the contribution of some factors, not only from the number of tourist. This fact is tried to be shown in the Figure 3.



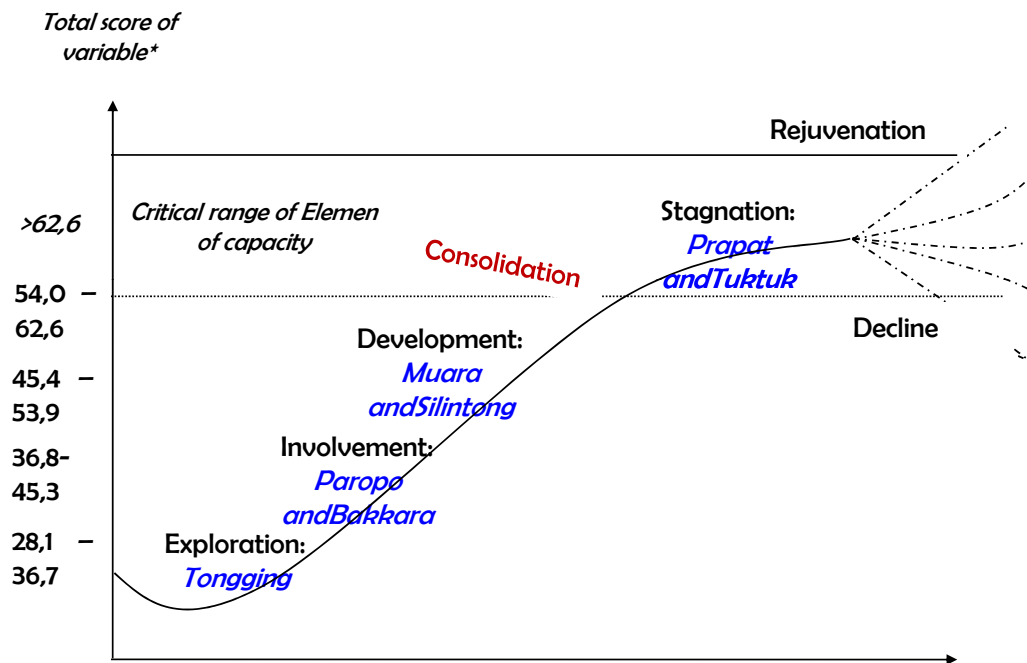


Figure 3. Tourism Area Life Cycle Based on Total Score of Variables

The graphic above shows the total score of variables measured in each tourism area, ranges from the lowest 28.1 to the highest 71.0 and are classified to five categories. The hypothetically made assumption before is the higher the total score of variables achieved by an area, the more developed the tourism area is. In the context of *TALC*, the more developed tourism area is located in the development to the stagnation phase.

According to the contribution of various variables of product, market, institution and local community in each tourism area stated above, this research shows that the *TALC* concept could be proven partially in Lake Toba area. Meaning is there is a significant difference in the development of tourism area, either based on the number of tourist as a single variable or the accumulation of various variables.

This analysis shows that the motion of development in each area is not biological, by which it means that a leap of development could possibly happen, for example skipping to the stagnation phase from the exploration phase; from the involvement phase to the stagnation phase; from the development phase to the

stagnation phase without undergoing the consolidation phase. The same thing happens with a reverse analysis which uses the variable of number of tourist in 1996 (the heyday of Lake Toba tourism), the *TALC* tends to form a linear spiral rather than a curve.

Besides, this analysis also shows the strength of the interaction among some variables which play significant roles in creating the structure and pattern of the development of tourism destination in Lake Toba area. Two strategic factors were found through empiric data: a) *government policies*, related to the existence and legitimacy of the tourism master plan, and also the consistency of the tourism-management-related regulation; and b) *local community respond*; related to the participation of the society in the management of tourism.

The explanation above shows the discovery in this research, there is a significant difference in the structure and pattern of the development of tourism area in Lake Toba area. The difference is related to the number of factors and accumulation of the influence by these factors is what stated each position in the

*TALC* line. Proven that not all area in this study took place of the development phases as assumed in the theoretic concept *TALC*, as stated by other researchers [Butler, 2006; 2011; Bo and Zhang, 2006; Hovinen, 2006]. The government policies and local society support influence the difference in the pattern and structure of the imbalance development.

## CONCLUSION

1. The development of tourism in Lake Toba doesn't completely follow the linear line as assumed by Butler (1980) in the tourism area life cycle concept, because apart of the quantitative indicator of tourist in each area, it is also related directly to the product factor and the tourism attraction.
2. The development of tourism area is different from one another as a result of the different characteristic of the visiting tourist market and the real condition of the attraction, availability of facilities, and accessibility. Different from the assumption in *TALC* which emphasized the number of tourist as a benchmark in the area development, this research shows that the demographic characteristic and the tourist market economy affect more. Besides, the difference of the stages of development in Lake Toba is also related to the superstructure factor, especially the tourism institutes and policies. This research shows that the support of the institutes is a variable that stimulates the development of tourism in Lake Toba. The difference in government policies in supporting the development of tourism leads to the difference in the development of tourism area in that region.
3. Contrast to the theoretic assumption of *TALC* used in this study, the seven tourism area in Lake Toba empirically do not take the place of the tourism area life cycle described in the previous studies. The development of tourism destination in Lake Toba

undergoes a leap and skips one stage, especially when it's seen from the number of tourist.

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